



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **VOLUNTEERING AWARDS 2023**

**Tuesday 27 February 2024**

### **Acknowledgments**

**The Honourable Ros Spence MP**, Minister for Carers and Volunteers, *representing the Premier*, and **Ryan Batchelor MP**, Member for the Southern Metropolitan Region.

**Bronwen Clark**, Chair, and **Geoff Sharp**, acting CEO, Volunteering Victoria

**Penny Fowler**, Chair, Herald and Weekly Times

**Most importantly, our 2023 Volunteering Award finalists**

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to Government House to celebrate the nominees and recipients of the 2023 Volunteering Awards.

Since 2021, these awards have recognised and celebrated the work of altruistic Victorians.

Volunteer work has played a role both here at Government House and in Victoria more broadly.

In particular, there is an often untold history of volunteer and charity work amongst the spouses of Victoria's Governors.

Many were ahead of their time, advocating for women's health, unemployed Victorians or victim-survivors fleeing domestic violence.

Others focused on developing the cultural life of our State, supporting local artists and performers.

Many of the organisations founded or supported by these women, have become defining features of the Victorian community.

Lady Barkly, the wife of Victoria's second Governor, Sir Henry Barkly KCB, gave her time and resources to raise funds for the Melbourne Hospital which opened in 1848.

Better known today as the Royal Melbourne, her foresight and community focus helped create Victoria's first public hospital.

More recent examples include Lady Munro Ferguson GBE, wife of The Right Honourable Sir Ronald Craufurd Munro-Ferguson GCMG PC.

In 1914, this House was the official residence of Australia's Governor-General and, thanks to Lady Ferguson's volunteer work, became the founding site of the Australian Red Cross.

The Ballroom we are meeting in today was used as a supply depot, sending resources to soldiers fighting in World War I.

Of course, the role that volunteering has, and continues to play in Victorian life, extends far beyond this House and its history.

American cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead, once argued, "*a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*"

Today's nominees have proven the veracity behind this sentiment.

Approximately 2.3 million Victorians volunteer their time and energy to community groups.

They give their time to environmental programs, health services, community sport, cultural events, emergency management and many other causes.

Each of them demonstrate the impact that ordinary people have on the lives of those in their community.

Many in our State, rely on the services of volunteer organisations to make ends meet.

Local conservation programs are often started and maintained by community initiatives.

Social cohesion and cross-cultural collaboration are encouraged through community sport run by volunteer members.

And major events like the Australian Open, Midsumma Festival, and Rising, rely on the time and effort of everyday Victorians.

The categories of these awards highlight the rich diversity to be found in our volunteer community.

The award of *Young Volunteer* highlights how anyone, of any age, can give back to their community while *Volunteer Commitment*, *Volunteer Leadership*, and *Volunteer Impact* demonstrate the many ways we can help those around us.

Thank you to Volunteering Victoria and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing for organising today's event. And congratulations to all nominees and recipients.

More than 450 entries were received by the Volunteering Awards for 2023 and you should be proud to be among the 52 shortlisted finalists.

I now invite Minister Spence to address us.